

YIN YOGA THEORY

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Yin Yoga History

For 2500 years, the Taoist principle of Yin/Yang has been depicted in a familiar circular symbol known throughout the world. It is worn on bracelets, appears on clothing, and is used in corporate logos. This symbol represents core Taoist principles, with some interesting nuances, which are central to its philosophy.

Since Taoism's philosophical and religious system is built on a holistic view of reality, its yin/yang symbol is foremost a representation of Universal Oneness with black and white colors alternating within a single circle. Thus the duality of all phenomena – whether summer and winter, male and female, or life and death – are shown to be opposing manifestations of the same principle and should not to be viewed as independent phenomena.

The yin/yang symbol is half white and half black, each side representing a polar opposite. Note, too, that the symbol is neither predominantly white nor predominately black, but equal portions of each. This is meant to represent the balanced proportions of our universe as found in nature. For example, both day and night are needed in roughly equal proportions for life on earth to thrive. The symbol also exhibits rotating pattern between the two colors, suggesting a continuous exchange or movement from black to white and from white to black, like day to night and night to day. These natural manifestations of the yin yang principle illustrate how opposites must balance for harmony to be achieved. In Chinese medicine, the balance of yin/yang forces is the most important of healing principles.

In the Tao, understanding yin/yang forces is essential to successfully building one's path through life. For example, the yin/yang symbol has a definite line between the white and black areas; a well-defined contour distinguishing the two colors. This clarity of color symbolizes the need for clarity in all aspects of a life. Gray isn't found in the yin/yang symbol. Clarity requires one to commit to do nothing halfway; or to paraphrase an old adage, one shouldn't try to sit on two chairs. In becoming a spiritual person, a clear purposeful understanding of what is happening is required to determine appropriate action. Caution is required when black and white mix to form an uncertain gray.

Unfortunately, confusion will invariably arise when presented with new situations during the course of life. Periods of confusion can be expected, much in the same way that each day transitions through twilight into night. It is the goal of the Taoist, however, to keep his twilight – his period of confusion – as short as possible. As in nature, twilight does not last 24 hours.

Some people seem to embrace confusion, chasing the twilight. They fear decision-making because it carries responsibility for action. For these people, the line between yin and yang is blurred as they remain passive in ambiguous periods. Taoism's strategy, instead, is to gain clarity and not stay in the middle. Sometimes this can be hard as decisions to achieve clarity may involve uncomfortable conversations followed by tough action. For example, not confronting a dysfunctional and unclear relationship – both personal and professional – comes to mind.

It is equally important to distinguish clarity from purity. A clear vision of the world and decisive navigation throughout life should not be based upon unrealistic expectations of purity. The futility of searching for absolute purity is illustrated by the small white dot in the black area and the small black dot in the white area of the yin/yang symbol. For example, one has no trouble distinguishing day from night, and yet there is not pure darkness at night – there is still some light from the moon and stars. Similarly, when an accomplished artist paints a tree leaf, he mixes in a little brown and yellow paint with the green to achieve a natural, lifelike appearance; a child painting the same leaf would use pure green, which appears artificial and unnatural.

Embracing the power of opposites is necessary for most phenomena to function correctly. An athlete knows muscles grow only if intense physical training is followed by a period of relaxation – otherwise overtraining results in damaged muscles. A military officer cultivates tactics for aggressive attack, but also understands how to retreat. Lao Tzu emphasized this inclusion of a small component of opposites, warning that the male part of any phenomenon should "embrace the female." Thus a natural path does not seek unrealistic purity, but rather a harmony of opposites.

The yin/yang symbol is a circle and not a square; there are no straight lines in nature. In fact, any dynamic motion is more efficient when following a trajectory similar to the yin/yang contour. Thus, the physical motions used in Tai Chi and Chi Gong are circular and not straight in order to better accelerate the body's natural energies. Martial artists develop increased power by using yin/yang circular motions that are anatomically correct and optimal accelerators.

In the intellectual realm, the yin/yang's symbol offers a valuable tool for sorting out life's priorities and making difficult decisions. It turns out that it's easier for the mind to comprehend what is not wanted, rather than what is desired. For example, if asked what a person wants out of life, there is often confusion and bewilderment. However, by mentally exploring what is not wanted, the desired aspects become clearer and clearer. It turns out that investigating the opposite side of any phenomenon often

provides an easier path to enlightenment than the more direct approach. This is a valuable technique that can be immediately used without specialized training.

Yin generally refers to things that are relatively deeper, inside, colder, downward, female, stiffer and slower; Yang generally refers to things that are higher, hotter, flexible, light, male, outside, bright, upward, active, and quick.

A tropical monsoon begins quickly, pours all its waters in a thunderous short time and quickly abates. A drizzly mist that lingers for days slowly soddening everything lasts for days and even weeks. The monsoon is yang to the drizzle is yin. The terms yin and yang are Daoist but these complementary qualities of nature were noticed by most high cultures. Yin and yang are not unique to China; the Indian yogis also noticed this complementary nature of reality.

Death haunts us. Its inevitability is one of the most important driving forces in life. Its uncontrollable arrival is feared and the loss of loved ones lamented. However, the yin/yang symbol illustrates a profound philosophical view that provides comfort. It turns out that the symbol's rotation of colors represents the journey of the soul and prompts this question: If you fear what happens to your soul after it departs the dead body, shouldn't you wonder where it came from when it entered the body? That is, the soul goes somewhere at the time of death, so it came from somewhere at time of birth. The realization that death is that time when the soul returns to its home is reassuring. It also carries profound implications about the purpose of life.

Symbols are important: countries have flags, companies have logos, and religions have icons. Taoism's yin/yang symbol is remarkable because it represents the faith's cornerstone principles for immediate application in handling life's big challenges.

Origin of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM)

A fundamental principle of the Chinese system of medicine is that the human body-mind-spirit spectrum is a holistic one. As humans, we are intrinsically linked to our outside worlds from family, society, environment, and ultimately to the Universe. Based on this view, all manifestation of diseases is viewed as an outcome of an imbalance originating within oneself or in one's relationship to the external reality.

Dao & Yin- Yang Philosophy

"Writings do not express words clearly, words do not express thoughts clearly"; "thus the Sages created images to express thoughts clearly." LaoZi

The terms Dao (or Tao), Yin and Yang are images created by ancient sages to depict their insights into reality. The word Dao is used to embrace the eternal primordial source also called the Void, as well as the potential from which all things arise. There are two sides of the Dao. In its passive state, the Dao is empty and non-doing; while in its active state the Dao is seen to create and propel reality and all its enterprises.

Building upon the concept of Dao, the ancient sages created a dualistic phenomenon called Yin-Yang to describe the natural tendencies arise in nature. The terms Yin and Yang mean the dark and lighter

sides of a mountain respectively, gradually extended to refer to the principle of duality inherent in all manifestation. There are 4 primary principles explain the dynamic interplay between the Yin and Yang in traditional Chinese medicine.

What is Yin Yoga

Yin Yoga is based on the Taoist concept of yin and yang, opposite and complementary principles in nature. In the body, the relatively stiff connective tissues (tendons, ligaments, fascia) are yin, while the more mobile and pliable muscles and blood are yang.

A Yin Yoga class usually consists of a series of long-held, passive floor postures that mainly work the lower part of the body: the hips, pelvis, inner thighs, lower spine. These areas are especially rich in connective tissues. The poses are held for up to five minutes, and at times, longer.

Yin is a more meditative approach to yoga, with a physical focus much deeper than Yang like practices (such as power yoga or vinyasa). In yin, the practitioner is trying to access the deeper tissues such as the connective tissue and fascia and many of the postures focus on areas that encompass a joint (hips, sacrum, spine). As one ages flexibility in the joints decreases and Yin yoga is a wonderful way to maintain that flexibility, something that for many do not seem to be too concerned about until they notice it is gone.

As Humans, we are natural 'Yangsters'. We love to stress our body, even if it is too much. We have the 'survival of the fittest' mentality. In yin (which we feel should be adopted into all styles of yoga), what is important is how the pose feels, rather than what the pose looks like. We do not use our body to get into the pose, rather we use the pose to get into our body.

This intimate practice of yoga requires students to be ready to get intimate with 'the self', with feelings, sensations, and emotions, something which can be easily avoided in a fast paced yang based yoga practice. Yin yoga is often used in programs that deal with addictions, eating disorders, anxiety and deep pain or trauma.

For several postures, Iyengar advised students to "Stay in this pose as long as you can ..." These were yin postures, although that Chinese term was obviously not used. While yin postures were and still are a part of the Hatha yoga practice, they remained a minor part and no one seemed to be teaching classes that were entirely yin. On the other hand, there were more and more classes offered that were entirely yang, except for the ending Savasana: Ashtanga, Power Yoga, Vinyasa Flow Yoga, Hot Yoga, Kundalini and many other styles typify this yang emphasis.

We know that the use of yin postures in yoga is not new. It has been around since the beginning of the physical practice of yoga. Thus no one person can be given credit for inventing yin postures. There was a time when all yoga was yin-like, and perhaps the balance was too far in that direction. A rebalancing occurred when yang postures grew in prominence. However, as time went on, yoga practice became more and more yang-like. Nature desires balance - we could say she demands balance. If we don't seek it out, she will impose it upon us eventually. Yoga could not continue to be more and more yang without someone finding a way to bring it back into balance.

In the last decade of the 20th century, two teachers did start to bring yin postures back into the prominence they once had in the yoga world: Paul Grilley and Sarah Powers. Paul was first exposed to instances of long held postures in 1989, while attending Paulie Zink's Taoist Yoga classes. The history of the term, Taoist Yoga is also interesting. It is not a term that has been in use for very long. Its first occurrence was probably in a book called Taoist Yoga: Alchemy and Immortality, written by Lu K'uan Yu's (Charles Luk; 1898-1978) , which he published in 1973. The practice of Taoist Yoga equates simply to Chi Kung, but by using the word "yoga" in the name, Lu K'uan Yu was able to leverage the growing popularity of yoga to help students become interested in Chi Kung. After Lu K'uan Yu, a few other teachers, like Mantak Chia in the 1980's, also began to refer to their Chi Kung as Taoist Yoga as well.

Benefits & Contraindications of Yin Yoga

Increases flexibility

Yin poses are demanding. You need to remain still for long periods of time. But this gives you a greater range of motion and increased flexibility in the longer term. By holding poses and stretches your body will feel longer, lighter, and looser.

Heals the body

Studies show that a Yin practice helps to stimulate the parasympathetic nervous system, which in turn allows your body to rest and digest so that it can begin to recover from fatigue and chronic muscle pain. As we age, we tend to do 3 things to our tissues: compress, stretch and twist them, resulting in tension and stress. Yin yoga helps promote circulation of blood, nutrients, creating a free flow of energy; which can replenish lost energy. Studies that show Yin Yoga can support healing from TMJ and migraines.

Alleviates stress and tension

In yin, your goal is to deepen your breath, as the more oxygen you get into your muscles, the more they will release and lengthen, which lowers cortisol levels (commonly known as stress hormones).

Improves balance

Yin yoga requires you to stay in a pose for several minutes at a time. The longer the time you hold the pose, the more effort you need to put in to balance your whole body.

Improves flexibility & mobility

Yin can serve as a foundation for creating a well-balanced body and even after a few sessions you'll enjoy increased mobility, coordination, mindfulness and balance within your internal organ system through an improved flow of chi or prana through meridian stimulation. Approximately 70% of the volume of fascia is made up of water found in the non-fibrous substance. Both stretching and compression play a significant role in tissue hydration. When you load tissue, fluid is squeezed out and into the lymphatic system, including fluids present as a result of swelling (Myers 2012). When the loads are released, and the tissues are left to rest, new fluid is pulled back in like a sponge (Klingler et al 2004). Loading our tissues, especially neglected ones, refreshes them.

Contraindications of Yin Yoga

Yin yoga is not recommended within two months after giving birth. The focus should be on poses which help new mothers regain strength and stability in the core abdominal, pelvic floor and back muscles.

During pregnancy, especially in the third trimester, you should avoid very deep stretching. The body produces a hormone during pregnancy that softens the connective tissues. This leads to higher risk of strains and pulls.

Anyone with bulging or herniated discs should skip the twists and forward folds with the back rounded. People with strong posterior pelvic tilt should bend their knees in forward folds.

An Interesting Study by Paul Grilley

Paul Grilley performed an interesting study: He measured the height of the same person in the morning, afternoon, and after Yin Yoga practices. Throughout the day, humans lose height as a result of fluid loss in our vertebral discs. When he measured their subject after a Yin Yoga practice, he consistently saw that she regained some of her lost height as her spinal tissues rehydrated.

Well-hydrated tissues have a springy quality that helps them to return to their original shapes after being loaded. Hydrated tissues also respond better and more efficiently to stress. And, well-hydrated tissues can more easily transfer nutrients to the cells and rid the body of toxins (Clark 2012).

Perhaps one of the most intriguing discoveries about fascia is that it is our greatest sensory organ, and it plays a major role in our proprioception. Movement modalities that emphasize physical awareness and internal listening can help refine the sensory nature of our tissues. Preliminary studies have shown an inverse relationship between pain and proprioception, making this a worthwhile pursuit.

This is particularly exciting for those of us who practice Yin Yoga. When we hold non-neutral shapes for minutes, we have a lot of opportunity to practice listening to our outer and inner states. Taking our time between poses to notice the before and after effects can also enhance our sensing abilities. Though not impossible, it is much harder to pay attention to how we feel in a more dynamic practice since much of our mental energy is devoted to orchestrating our movements.

Why Is Yin Different?

There are two principles that differentiate yin practice from more yang approaches to yoga: holding poses for at least several minutes and stretching the deep tissues. To do the latter, the overlying muscles must be relaxed. If the muscles are tense, the connective tissue will not receive the proper stress. You can demonstrate this by gently pulling on your right middle finger, first with your right hand tensed and then with the hand relaxed. When the hand is relaxed, you will feel a stretch in the joint where the finger joins the palm; the connective tissue that knits the bones together is stretching. When the hand is tensed, there will be little or no movement across this joint, but you will feel the muscles straining against the pull.

Because Yin Yoga requires that the muscles be relaxed around the connective tissue you want to stretch, not all yoga poses can be done effectively or safely. It's not necessary, or even possible for all the muscles to be relaxed when you're doing some Yin Yoga postures. In a seated forward bend, for example, you can gently pull with your arms to increase the stretch on the connective tissues of your spine. But in order for these connective tissues to be affected, you must relax the muscles around the spine itself.

Standing poses, arm balances, and inversions; poses that require muscular action to protect the structural integrity of the body cannot be done as yin poses. Also, although many yin poses are based on popular yoga asanas, the emphasis on releasing muscles rather than on contracting them means that the shape of poses and the techniques employed in them may be slightly different than we are accustomed to in yang practices. Yin postures are often labelled with different names as well.

Who Is Yin Yoga For?

Yin Yoga is for you if you are tired, over-stimulated, when your energy is too erratic, your mind overactive, whether you are craving for energy or you feel you have too much of it.

We live in a world where we are bombarded with stimuli, stimuli that is available 24/7. Think about your laptops, phones and other mobile devices. It's so easy to end up not switching off at all anymore. To end up with a mind that is constantly busy processing all that information that you throw at it. Whether the information is good, valuable or rubbish, it doesn't matter, the mind still needs to deal with it.

The mind gets used to that amount of information and starts to crave stimuli if it gets quiet. So you end up browsing, looking for stuff, it doesn't matter what as long as you fill the gaps. Gaps we really should allow to stay empty to find some sort of down time - for the mind to stop and for you to just be.

Any kind of dynamic form of yoga caters for this aspect of keeping yourself busy. Although the mind may calm down as a result of the active exercise, you are still feeding the part of you that wants intensity and wants to be stimulated. You just happen to have found yourself a healthier stimulus!

Yin Yoga and The Mind

Becoming still in a pose and holding it for an extended period of time creates space for thoughts and feeling to arise, and usually what comes up in these situations are the things that we suppress in our day to day life. Yin Yoga allows you to take the time to allow any and all thoughts and feelings to simply be, especially the ones that have been hanging around in your shadow.

Generally speaking during a Yin Yoga class the teacher will encourage you to allow all of the thoughts and feelings to be there. A skilled teacher will guide you to become the observer of everything that arises in your experience. This gives your experience a change to happen; therefore evoking release holding.

This can be an effective pattern to create, as you then are able to observe the physical sensations for the emotions without getting caught up in blame or the stories of which the emotions are attached to.

When you begin to re-pattern your mind to act differently you are able to clear out any blockages in your body - whether they are physical, emotional, mental or energetic.

The Best Yin Poses to Prepare for Seated Meditation

All seated meditation postures aim at one thing: holding the back upright without strain or slouching so that energy can run freely up and down the spine. The fundamental factor that affects this upright posture is the tilt of the sacrum and pelvis. When you sink back in a chair so that the lower spine rounds, the pelvis tilts back. When you "sit up straight," you are bringing the pelvis to a neutral alignment. This alignment is what you want for seated meditation. The placement of the upper body takes care of itself if the pelvis is properly adjusted.

A basic yin practice to facilitate seated meditation should incorporate forward bends, hip openers, backbends, and twists. Forward bends include not just the basic two-legged seated forward fold but also poses that combine forward bending and hip opening. All of the forward bends stretch the ligaments along the back side of the spine and help decompress the lower spinal discs. The straight legged forward bends stretch the fascia and muscles along the backs of the legs.

Yin Yoga Anatomy

All the connective tissues found in the body, including fascia, tendons, and ligaments, are comprised of cells, fibers (collagen and elastin), and a gel-like fluid called ground substance. The ratio of these elements varies depending on the type of tissue and its location in the body. For instance, your achilles tendons are thicker and more fibrous than your earlobes. But they are, more or less, the same thing.

The differences in the fiber/fluid make-up of these tissues match their functions. An Achilles tendon is thick and elastic so that it can absorb impact and produce power for running and jumping. But the fascia that wraps around the individual muscles fibers in our thighs is less thick and contains a lot of ground substance to reduce friction.

Researchers have also discovered that the separate connective tissue types respond differently to different loads. What a ligament needs to maintain its optimal function is not the same as a joint capsule. The overall takeaway from the research is that to sustain the robustness of all of our tissues we need to engage in a variety of activities. Healthy loads include the kind of passive, static stretches and compressions of Yin Yoga.

In particular, we know that static stretching stimulates the deep layers of fascia that wrap around the bundles of muscle fibers. Also, the fascia that connects muscles to one another is affected by passive stretches. But, passive loads don't affect tendons and ligaments. Due to their arrangement, the relaxed muscle fibers absorb most of the tissue lengthening (Schleip, Muller 2012).

But, what do we mean by "stimulates" and "affected by?" What's really going on here?

The primary cells found in fascia are called fibroblasts, and their main job, among a couple of other things, is to create more fascia. The brain doesn't control the fibroblasts. Instead, fibroblast behavior is determined mainly by the mechanical loads (or lack of loads) placed on them.

In Yin Yoga, we are mainly interested in the effects of compressive and tensile (stretch) loads on our tissues. The sensation you feel in the low back during sphinx or seal pose is a result of compressive forces on the soft tissues and vertebrae. When you fold forward in butterfly pose, you are stretching the back.

The fibroblast cells will adjust the production of collagen, elastin, and ground substance to create an architecture best suited for the demands placed on them (Benjamin et al., 2005). These loads need to be progressive (appropriately increased) and occur over an extended period of time. When it comes to remodelling connective tissue, lengths of time are measured in months and years (Schleip 2012).

Researchers have found that the fibroblasts in tendons and ligaments adapt to compressive forces by producing strong, fibrous collagen that can withstand additional forces (Benjamin et al., 1998). Without specific research, we can reasonably conclude that compressive Yin Yoga poses contribute positively to fascia health.

Can Tissues Lengthen When Stretched? This seems to be the big point of contention when it comes to Yin Yoga. The short answer seems to be yes, BUT...

The better questions might be: how long does this lengthening last? Can we retain new length permanently? Is there an end point to how much we can stretch before it becomes harmful? Unfortunately, not only are the questions tricky, but we can't answer them with certainty.

Here are a few things we do know:

Connective tissues do have some plasticity, the ability to undergo change under a load. We know that slow, sustained tensile loads change tissue length more effectively than a quick stretch (Myers 2012). Think of a plastic grocery store bag. If you tug on it quickly, it resists change. But if you pull on it slowly and carefully, it reshapes and permanently deforms. Eventually, it will tear.

The term for our tissues' ability to stretch is called creep. Creep is measured by the amount of force applied, rate, and length of time. Of interest to Yin yogis: our tissues creep even if you don't increase the loads (Mitchell 2014).

Here's an analogy: What do you do with a nearly empty bottle of hair conditioner to get the rest of it out? You turn the bottle upside down and wait. What's happening is that the steady (not increasing) force of gravity will slowly pull the conditioner down to the opening of the bottle. The relationship of time to creep seems to indicate that even mild Yin Yoga poses could lengthen our tissues.

Students often say that Yin Yoga postures "last longer than regular yoga." But I've never heard someone say that the effects last forever, and this certainly hasn't been my experience.

The plastic bag analogy only goes so far because plastic bags aren't living tissue. Fascia is also elastic, so when you remove the loads, the tissues gradually recover their original shape as long as they aren't overstretched and damaged. Some studies have shown that very long holds of around 20 minutes can take hours to recover (Clark 2016). But they do recover eventually.

There is also another factor to consider when we ask ourselves what are we doing in Yin Yoga: Involuntary tissue contraction.

This will surprise very few people, but we humans unconsciously contract our tissues in response to stress (physical, psychological, emotional, etc.). If we are under stress for an extended period of time, we can "forget" how to relax, meaning that our tissues may remain in a constant contractive state even when the stressor has been removed (Myers 2012).

Further, we find that this constant state of contraction leads to a thickening of the fascia (Langevin et al. 2009). The research suggests that many people aren't feeling an increase in range of motion after stretching, but rather they experience a return to a normal resting state.

On the cellular level, stretching does produce changes, which over time, can create adaptations and remodelling of the tissues. Just like compression, tensile loads on connective tissues stimulate the fibroblasts to produce more collagen fibers, which increases fascial thickness and strength (Myers 2012). What we don't know is how long one must hold these loads for meaningful and permanent changes to take hold. Nor do we know how much is too much before we cause damage. Likely this "Goldie Locks" sweet spot is different for everyone.

Fascia Tissue

FASCIA is pronounced 'FAH-sha'. It's everywhere inside of the human body. In Latin, fascia means 'band'. Fascia is a fibre and fluid based system; which 'bands the human body together'. It's comprised of a vast network of soft tissue connective tissue within the human body. Fascia includes superficial, deep and loose fascial layers, ligaments and tendons.

For centuries research has written and taught about more familiar structures of the human body: bones, muscles, organs, blood vessels, and nerves. For year's anatomical study disregarded 'FASCIA' as nothing more than an inert 'space-filler' inside the human body.

Although fascia has been within the human body all along, it's only in more recent years being appreciated for the invaluable role it plays in the human body's health and functioning. There is a significant amount we need to learn about this mysterious tissue. Research discovered that fascia is a dynamic, communicative and integral part of the human body. Also, this fascinating System is a '3D Web' of connectivity; it surrounds and interpenetrates all of the various human body parts.

Instead of thinking of fascia as an inanimate space-filler, we now know that this fascinating system is a 3D web of connectivity that surrounds and interpenetrates all of our various "parts." Our fascial system is technically comprised of all of the soft tissue connective tissue inside of us. This fibre and fluid based system includes superficial, deep and loose fascial layers, ligaments and tendons. Fascia weaves muscles, bones, organs, nerves, and blood vessels together into a 100% interconnected network that is more whole than it is separate.

Muscles are completely surrounded and interwoven with three distinct layers of fascia. These three fascial layers blend together at either end of a muscle and become tendons. Muscle and fascia are intertwined and collectively with tendons; 'myofascial unit', instead of simply a muscle.

During asana practice the physical human body is moved into various positions that includes using both muscles and fascia at the same time. There's not a single pose that targets only our muscles or only our fascia. Additionally, muscles (myofascial units) never truly operate as individual, isolated muscles. Via fascial connections, muscles are linked to long functional chains; it's these larger myofascial chains that are responsible for movement. Instead of focusing on the separateness of each body part, fascia provides an opportunity to appreciate the reality of interconnectedness within the human body.

When observing fascia, it's alive and tangible representation of the principle of oneness within the human body. The continuous fascial network unites everything on the inside and creates an environment where what happens in one localized area of the body (stretch, massage, injury) directly affects the body as a whole.

A Dynamic Organ of Communication

In addition to creating literal interconnectedness, fascia plays a remarkable role of helping the human body to sense itself; without using eyes to see itself from the outside. Fascia is full of innumerable sensory nerve endings. Fascia is in constant communication with the brain relating to the human body's position in space. 'Proprioception' is the human body's ability to use 'inner vision' to sense itself is (true sixth sense').

Fascial system is a major organ of proprioception. The health of our fascia is connected to how developed our 'inner vision' is. We all possess an acceptable level of proprioception. This supports the human body to move through life. In recent years, it has become apparent that learning high quality proprioception is an important key to healthy aging. Research discovered a link between increased levels of proprioception and decreased levels of pain in the human body. Therefore, more the human brain can sense the body accurately; the human body will experience less pain. The more developed the proprioception results are more natural and skillful daily movements. This reduces chance of injury in the first place; as the human body ages this becomes increasingly important.

Variation is Key

Because the fascial system is a major organ of proprioception, the health of fascia is directly connected to how developed the 'inner vision' is. One of the main ways fascia stays healthy is by moving in various and different ways (as opposed to repetitive).

If fascial tissues are moved in the same way all the time (repetitive activities: running, biking, too many chaturangas, sitting at a computer for eight hours every day), the fascial tissues will grow weaker and are more prone to injury. Alternately, if fascia tissues are moved in a wide array of movements (non-repetitive yoga, walking on varied terrains, climbing rocks and trees, regular bodywork and massage), fascia tissues respond by adapting to diversity of movement input and will grow stronger and be more resilient. Movement variability and high quality proprioception are some of the most powerful tools to utilize related to ageing gracefully.

Conclusion

Fascia research has offered many new insights about the structure and function of the human body. It is imperative to care for fascia tissues and keep the tissues moist through healthy forms of movement; this will ensure the fascia will continue to do an amazing job of supporting the human body from the inside out.

Yin Yoga and Qi

Qi can be viewed in a similar way as prana. If you experiment (we will in this program) and only spend a few minutes a couple times a week practicing several of these poses, you will likely be pleasantly surprised at how different you feel when you sit to meditate. But that improved ease may not be the only or even the most important benefit of Yin Yoga. If Dr. Motoyama and other researchers are right—if the network of connective tissue does correspond with the meridians of acupuncture and the nadis of yoga—strengthening and stretching connective tissue may be critical for your long-term health.

Chinese medical practitioners and yogis have insisted that blocks to the flow of vital energy (Qi or Prana) throughout our body eventually manifest in physical problems that would seem, on the surface, to have nothing to do with weak knees or a stiff back. Much research is still needed to explore the possibility that science can confirm the insights of yoga and Traditional Chinese Medicine. But if yoga postures really do help us reach down into the body and gently stimulate the flow of qi and prana through the connective tissue, Yin Yoga serves as a unique tool for helping you get the greatest possible benefit from yoga practice.

Good Pain V Bad Pain

'Good pain is reliable, consistent, and necessary. 'Yoga teaches us to cure what need not be endured and endure what cannot be cured.' B.K.S. Iyengar

'We must not try to run from the pain but to move through and beyond it. This is the cultivation of tenacity and perseverance, which is the spiritual attitude of yoga. This is also the spiritual attitude toward life.' B.K.S Iyengar

'Since pain is inevitable, asana is a laboratory in which we discover how to tolerate the pain that cannot be avoided and how to transform the pain that can.' B.K.S. Iyengar

GOOD PAIN

A process of a movement rather than a halting experience Promotes movement of energy
It becomes possible to create comfort in the discomfort Applies value over judgment

Feeling oriented

Intuition is aligned

You can breathe through good pain Good pain is subtle

BAD PAIN

A halting experience

Promotes a stuckness of energy

The physical discomfort takes over the experience

A result of a judgment of unworthiness, pushing too hard Goal oriented

Intuition was a prior warning

Bad pain makes you gasp and takes your breath away Bad pain is sharp

Tension V Compression

Compression is good for joints and stimulates the bones to healthy growth. Yang exercise develops strong muscles and bones but can leave the joints contracted and stiff. This is common among athletes.

Article by Paul Grilley

Tension or Compression: The Fundamental Distinction by Paul Grilley September 20, 2004, Ashland, Oregon Posted to e-Sutra January 4, 2005

Architectural principles start from the premise that all structures, including our bodies, are a balance between stretching forces and crushing forces, or briefly "tension and compression". The cables that stabilize telephone poles or lift elevators are being stretched, they are subject to tension. The telephone pole itself or the support columns holding up a building are being pressed, they are under compression. When we practice Yoga asana the fundamental distinction to make is this: "Are the physical restrictions I am feeling tension or compression?" Tension is due to the stretching of muscle or connective tissue but compression is determined by the shape of our bones.

Skeletal differences

The bulk of my work as an invited Yoga teacher is anatomical. A few years ago I walked into "The Bone Room" in Berkeley, California and purchased five human femur bones. It was the best investment I ever made. In nearly all my presentations I point out the dramatic differences between these bones. Besides the obvious size and length variations I point out how some bones are twisted 40 degrees backward or rotated 30 degrees upward. These differences might remain a mere curiosity but when these skeletal differences are coupled with the idea of compression it usually turns a student's yoga world around. Because all of our bones are different, all of our joints compress at different angles of flexion and extension. Through our Yoga practice we can discover where we compress but our Yoga practice will not change where we compress.

A brief outline of the ideas presented in an "Anatomy for Yoga Workshop" is as follows:

1. When we practice asanas we move our joints.
2. When we move our joints our bones pivot away from each other.
3. Because the bones are moving apart tissues are stretched.
4. At first our limits of motion are determined by how much we can stretch.
5. But the ultimate limit to our range of motion is compression.
6. Compression is due to the shape of our bones.

Tensile Metaphors

Virtually all the metaphors of present day Yoga instruction are tensile.

“Relax” – relax the muscle tension, “Breathe into it” – soften up the tissue, “Let go” – relax tension, “Make a space” – let the bones move apart. But limiting our conceptions to tensile metaphors is walking with one leg. For the vast majority of us who have practiced yoga for several years the restrictions we experience are compressive, not tensile. It is the inherent shape of our bones that determines what we can or cannot practice safely. And because each person’s bones are differently formed then what is beneficial for one person is destructive to another.

Perfect Postures

The goal in presenting compression as the ultimate limit to a range of motion is to free ourselves from the tyranny of “proper form” and “perfect pose”. Asana practice is supposed to be a mild therapeutic that allows us to influence the movement of prana and fluids through our bodies, but in the present environment there is a naive belief that if we all try hard enough we can “do all the poses”. This is wrong. More damaging than the physical strains caused by pushing to “perfect” a pose is the lingering feeling of inadequacy. Many instructors explicitly or implicitly teach that our inability to perform asanas “correctly” is a reflection of deeper emotional problems. Because of this many students place far, far too much emphasis on “perfecting poses”. Many students pursue this imagined perfection not out of any vain desire to look good but because they earnestly want to uncover whatever is “holding them back” in their spiritual life. Note that “holding back” is a tensile metaphor. Having no idea of compression they dimly imagine that their joints must be restricted by soft tissues that they should be able to “lengthen”, “soften”, or “relax” if they could just “let go” of their emotional baggage.

Teach Skeletal Differences and Compression

Compression is not a native conception to Yoga students. Even if a student senses a “natural limitation” in their movements they will not use the word “compression” to describe it. The closest they will come is “I don’t bend that way.” Time and again I have seen students unable to tilt his pelvis forward in a forward bending posture because the trochanter of their femur is compressed. When I ask them where they feel the restriction they are not sure what to say because they don’t feel a “stretch” in their groin or hamstrings. They are not in pain. Pushing on them doesn’t bother them much. They just “can’t do down”.

Because of the nature of my work I am constantly asked by students what they can do to “improve” different poses. After a quick examination of their skeletal movements I can usually tell them there is nothing to “improve”, their asanas are fine as they are. I tell them that they don’t look like the pictures in the book because of the shape of their bones. People in my workshops usually accept this opinion with a huge sense of relief but this is because they have been introduced to the ideas of skeletal differences and compression. Without these two ideas Yoga students sometimes interpret any suggestion of limitation as “pessimistic”. But if it is possible to communicate to a student that it is the unique shape of her bones that is limiting her then she will start to let go of trying to make her poses “perfect” and begin to relax and enjoy her practice.

Our mental and emotional life is reflected in the tissues of our bodies but this reflection is primarily in the soft tissues of the body. Two, asana practice influences the health of our bones but this is something different from their general contour. It is the general contour and proportion of our bones that determines our ranges of motion.

Yin Yoga as Acupressure

In Yin Yoga, poses act as a pressurizer to stimulate different meridians along the body. When practicing yin, gentle pressure is applied over an extended period (3-5 minutes or more). Similar to squeezing a garden hose, the pressure increases inside the tube, and upon releasing the hose, the water pressure pushes through the hose removing any toxins inside. When we hold a YIN pose, we dissipate any energetic stagnation by compressing the body tissues where the meridian are located.

Meridians can be stimulated in other activities such as walking, massage, dynamic yoga, climbing, etc. However, the most significant aspect of YIN is 'stillness'. YIN requires stillness in our mind and body. Through stillness, we can observe the nature of our mind and perhaps seek a deeper understanding of our life beyond the physical self.

The concept of Yin yoga has been around for thousands of years and some of the older text, such as the Hatha Yoga Pradipika notes only fifteen postures in its text, which is far less than the millions of postures practiced in today's yoga. In yoga history, we find both a yin and yang nature being described.

Yin Yoga Safety

When should we practice Yin Yoga?

- When muscles are cool
- Early morning
- Late at night
- Before an active Yang practice
- Seasonal transitions
- When life is hectic
- After a long trip
- Better/Easier to yin on an empty stomach
- At least 1 hour after eating

Critics of Yin Yoga worry that practitioners can overstretch their joints. Because there are no specific studies of Yin Yoga to date and relatively few studies of stretching overall, it's hard to refute this claim completely. We don't know what our thresholds are when it comes to stretching.

It is possible that someone could overdo it in a Yin pose. The problem could be that a pose is not appropriate for that person due to her unique anatomy or physiological state. It's also possible that everything in her movement history up to that moment could make a singular pose the last straw. This could happen in any yoga class as well as a number of other movement modalities. It doesn't make Yin Yoga inherently more dangerous than other forms of exercise.

It's also theoretically possible that someone could, over time, practice so much Yin Yoga that he overstretches his tissues to the point of instability. But we should also remember that the loads in Yin Yoga are relatively low, and some might even say that body weight isn't progressive enough to create lasting change anyway. When you consider that our tissues start to recover to their original starting point as soon as you remove the load, it seems unlikely that a semi-regular Yin Yoga practice would be dangerous. Of course, a lot would depend on what else you're doing with your body when you're not practicing Yin Yoga.

Our tissues need both compressive and tensile loads to keep us feeling vibrant and youthful.

Creep recovery and contracture make it pretty hard to go overboard with a Yin Yoga practice. I think you would really have to try. This is especially true when you remember that Yin Yoga teachers will remind you to approach the practice with the spirit of being rather than doing. The whole gestalt of Yin Yoga is to do less.

When practiced with this sensibility, I believe that Yin Yoga is about as safe as, if not safer than, any other form of yoga. But I don't think it is appropriate for everyone. A person's biology, history, life stage, pathologies, preferences all matter. There is no one size fits all. (ref: medium.com).

Is there such a thing as Hot Yin Yoga? Yes - but it is not it aligned with the Yin Yoga principles or philosophy. Muscles and Connective Tissues need to be cool to get the benefit of Yin. Having cool muscles will allow YIN POSTURES to get into deeper muscles and connective tissues (true benefit of YIN).

EFT and Yin Yoga

Emotional Freedom Techniques.

What is the Emotional Freedom Techniques? The Emotional Freedom Technique is the psychological acupressure technique taken from Traditional Chinese Medicine meridian alignment technique. It is a wonderful tool that can help balance emotional health.

EFT can help:

- Remove stuck emotions
- Promote balance within the emotional body
- Curve food cravings
- Reduce or eliminate pain
- Implement positive goals

As mentioned above, EFT is a process of activating the TCM meridian without the use of needles. It uses as simple tapping with the fingertips, which provides an input of kinetic energy onto specific meridians on the head and chest while you think about your specific problem – whether it is a traumatic event, an addiction, pain, etc. – and voice positive affirmations. This combination of tapping the energy meridians and voicing positive affirmation works to clear the stuck emotion from your body's bioenergy system, thus restoring your mind and body's balance, which is essential for optimal health and the healing of physical disease. Some people are initially wary of these principles that EFT is based on – the electromagnetic energy that flows through the body and regulates our health is only recently becoming recognized in the West. Others are initially taken aback by (and sometimes amused by) the EFT tapping and affirmation methodology, whose basics you will learn.

How to EFT Tap

The tapping locations and technique, and the positive affirmations. The basic EFT sequence is straightforward and generally takes clients only a few minutes to learn. With some practice, you will be performing each round in under a minute. As we discover the tapping areas, remember that while it is important to tap the correct area, you do not need to worry about being absolutely precise, as tapping the general area is sufficient.

The first thing to understand is that you will be tapping with your fingers. There are a number of acupuncture meridians on your fingertips, and when you tap with your fingertips you are also likely using not only the meridians you are tapping on, but also the ones on your fingers.

Traditional EFT has you tapping with the fingertips of your index finger and middle finger and with only one hand. Either hand works just as well. Most of the tapping points exist on either side of the body, so it doesn't matter which side you use, nor does it matter if you switch sides during the tapping; you can tap under your right eye and, later in the tapping, under your left arm. You can use both hands or only one hand, one, two or three fingers.

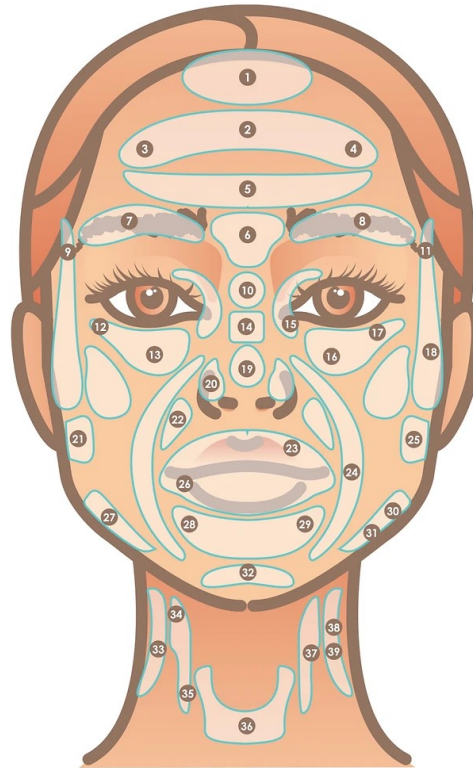
All methods work. Be mindful to use your finger tips, watch out for long nails and jewellery. If you have long nails, you can use your finger pads. Tap rather strongly, but do not hurt yourself! If you decide to use both hands, I recommend slightly alternating the tapping so that each hand is slightly out of phase with the other and you are not tapping with both hands simultaneously. This provides a kinaesthetic variant of the alternating eye movement work that is done in EMDR and may have some slight additional benefit.

When you tap on the points (referenced on our website), you will tap about five to seven times. The actual number is not critical, but ideally should be about the length of time it takes for one full breath. Remove Your Glasses and Watch Prior to Tapping. Glasses and watches can mechanically and electromagnetically interfere with EF, it is advisable to remove them prior to tapping.

When using EFT in YIN Yoga, you can ask your students to focus on releasing a certain emotion that is related to the specific meridian.

ACUPUNCTURE POINTS ON THE FACE

1. Bladder
2. Large intestine
3. Ascending colon
4. Descending colon
5. Small intestine
6. Hypothyroidism/ liver
7. Kidney top pole
8. Heart
9. Gall bladder
10. Pancreas
11. Gall bladder
12. Kidneys/ heart
13. Exhaustion/ adrenal glands
14. Stomach
15. Renal pelvis
16. Intestinal diseases
17. Liver
18. Gall bladder
19. Heart
20. Bronchia



21. Right lobe of the liver
22. Large intestine
23. Lesser curvature of the stomach
24. Pancreas/ liver/ gastritis
25. Left lobe of the liver
26. Pancreas
27. Small intestine
28. Upper pole of the kidney
29. Organs located in the lower abdomen
30. Small intestine
31. Hypothyroidism
32. Bladder
33. Right kidney
34. Esophagus
35. Cardiac part of the stomach
36. Thyroid
37. Autonomic disorders
38. Genitals
39. Left kidney